SOME NEW BOOKS.

Swinburne's Latest Poems.

The new poems collected under the title of *Songs of the Springtides* (Worthington) cannot fail to signally enhance Mr. SWINBURNE's reputation. Both as regards form and contents, they constitute a splendid and conclusive voucher of his claim to the foremost rank among contemporary English singers. In view of these exquisite compositions, no one henceforth, we imagine, will challenge the author's right to occupy a place of honor which Shelley alone is entitled to share with him among the masters of the English lyre.

That Mr. Swinburne has carried the development of rhythm and melody to a pitch of elaborate refinement and manifold beauty, not only unattained but unconceived before in English verse, had been already demonstrated by his previous performances. But there have been signs in certain quarters of an attempt at subtle disparagement by a perfunctory recognition of his skill in the technics of assonance and metre, coupled with the implied suggestion that higher and more spiritual gifts were less adequately attested in his poetry. Such vague, insinuated slurs were somewhat hard to meet, because, although abundant proof of profound insight and of the strongest sweep of the imagination could be drawn from his works, there were also, undoubtedly, scattered through his writings, snatches of song which touched the strings of merely fugitive emotion, and which did not aim to strike the deeper chords of feeling or sound the wells of thought. Most of the lyrics, however, presented in this volume are fraught of larger, richer, more enduring issues; they are weighted with great thoughts, and instinct with high passions; they breathe a purity, an elevation, a nobility of sentiment which, without pedantic exaggeration, may well be termed Pindaric. Whatever may be said of some earlier and shorter flights by which the author tried his wing, there is no question here of voluptuous tinklings and soft Lydian airs, of carnal hankerings and gross delights; the song is lifted far above the paltrinesses and the impurities of earth, and poises with steady plume in the cool empyrean. In a word, the beauteous body which Swinburne's poetry always had is here informed with a soul.

By far the loftiest strains which have come for many a year from any English singer are to be found in the "Birthday Ode" addressed to Victor Hugo, which fills a considerable part of the present volume. It is this remarkable work to which we would especially direct notice, but before scanning it in some detail we would pause a moment over two of the charming lyrics inserted in another poem, "The Garden of Cymodoce." The first is a description, or rather an invocation, of the Island of Guernsey, which the poet calls "the loveliest thing that shines against the sun," set, as it is, "midmost of the murderous water's web, all round it stretched and spun," and which "laughs reckless of rough tide and raging ebb." Only the artist in metre is likely to appreciate the consummate mechanism of this composition, but every ear attuned to music can feel the beauty of the rhythmic beat and the charm of an assonance subtler than that of rhyme:

O flower of all wind-flowers and sea-flowers,
Made lovelier by love of the sea
Than thy golden own field-flowers, or tree-flowers
Like foam of the sea-facing tree!
No foot but the sea-mew's there settles
On the spikes of thine anthers like horns,
With snow-colored spray for thy petals,
Black rocks for thy thorns.

Was it here, in the waste of his waters,
That the lordly north wind, when his love
On the fairest of many king's daughters
Bore down for a spoil from above,
Chose forth of all farthest far islands
As a haven to harbor her head,
Of all lowlands on earth and all highlands,
His bride-worthy bed?

Or haply, my sea-flower, he found thee,
Made fast as with anchors to land,
And broke, that his waves might be round thee,
Thy fetters like rivets of sand?
And afar by the blast of him drifted
Thy blossom of beauty was borne,
As a lark by the heart in her lifted
To mix with the morn?

By what rapture of rage, by what vision
Of a heavenlier heaven than above,
Was he moved to devise thy division
From the land as a rest for his love?
As a nest when his wings would remeasure
The ways where of old they would be,
As a bride-bed upbuilt for his pleasure
By sea-rock and sea?

Presently the poet remembers that this fairest of islands, hung like a "flower or jewel on the deep soft breast of the sea," was for long years the home of one whom he has elsewhere called "the greatest exile, and therefore the greatest man, of France;" of that patriot poet, proscribed after the crime of December, and whose "God-like, banished gaze turned," we are told, "from its goal of natural days and homeward hunger for the clear French clime toward English earth." In a second song, which voices the associations suggested by the refuge which Guernsey gave to Victor Hugo, the author returns to a scheme of melody, an experiment with which he published fifteen years ago, under the name of "Rococo." After apostrophizing the island as "throned with the world's most perilous sea for throne, and praised from all its choral throats of thunder," he continues thus:

Yet one praise hast thou holier,
Than praise of their's may be,
To exalt thee, wert thou lowlier
Than all that take the sea
With shores whence waves ebb slowlier
Than these fall off from thee:

That One, whose name gives glory,
One man whose life makes light,
One crowned and throned in story
Above all empire's height,
Came, where thy straits run hoary,
To hold thee fast in sight;

With hallowing eyes to hold thee,
With rapturous heart to read,
To encompass and enfold thee
With love whence all men feed,
To brighten and behold thee,
Who is mightiest of man's seed;

More strong than strong disaster,
For fate and fear too strong;
Earth's friend, whose eyes look past her,
Whose hands would purge of wrong;
Our lord, our light, our master,
Whose word sums up all song.

Be it April or September
That plays his perfect part,
Burn June or blow December,
Thou canst not in thine heart
But rapturously remember,
All heavenlike as thou art,

Whose footfall made thee fairer,
Whose passage more divine,
Whose hand, our thunder bearer,
Held fire that bade thee shine
With subtler glory and rarer
Than thrills the sun's own shrine.

The ode written for the anniversary festival of Victor Hugo, Feb. 20, 1880, is a work of extended scope, containing 520 lines, and whether we regard it from an artistic or intellectual and moral point of view, must be counted among the performances by which Mr. Swinburne will longest be remembered. As regards structure, it is framed with the nicest accuracy on the most admired Greek models, but so sure yet delicate is the author's touch, so close are the joinings, so felicitous the breaks, so apparently spontaneous the transitions and recurrences, that the reader's recognition of study and effort of artificial arrangement is not awakened for a moment. So smooth and limpid is the current of the verse, so naturally do its bend and gush seem to obey the changeful impulse of emotion, that not one reader in a hundred will detect the technical super-excellence of the work, or realize that beneath the even and lustrous surface lies a vast amount of tireless experiment and matchless skill; that we have here, in fact, a marvel of dexterity in the transfer to an alien and reluctant tongue of the most intricate and perfect metrical product transmitted by the Hellenic masters. That the substance of the poem is worthy of its garb will probably be demonstrated to the reader as we transcribe a series of passages in which the central motive or individual charm of Victor Hugo's multitudinous creations is succinctly outlined. We shall confine ourselves to the poet's allusions to the dramas and romances with which the American readers of Victor Hugo are most familiar. Here, for instance, are the lines in which the poet characterizes "Cromwell," one of the very earliest of Hugo's essays in dramatic poetry, whose initial line began with a prosaic date, and which, by its whole treatment, constituted an uncompromising and explosive protest against the formulas of Racine and the French classicists:

In spectral strength biform
Stand the twin sons of storm,
Transfigured by transmission of one hand
That gives the new-born time
Their semblance more sublime
Than once it lightened over each man's land;
There Freedom's winged and wide-mouthed hound,
And here our high Dictator, in his son discrowned.

Here, again, the pivotal situation of Hernani is painted in four lines:

Before the storm-blast blown of death's dark horn
The marriage moonlight withers, that the morn
For two made one may find three made by death
One ruin at the blasting of its breath.

The next four sketch the groundwork of "Marion de Lorme," who, in the first copy of the piece, was made to say that "*L'amour m'a refait ma virginité:*"

Clothed with heart's flame renewed
And strange new maidenhood,
Faith lightens on the lips that bloomed for hire
Pure as the lightning of love's first-born fire.

In the following the reader will recognize the root idea of "Le Roi s'amuse," that ghastly tragedy in which the jester Triboulet, thinking to wreak a frightful chastisement on Francis I., finds his own hand has murdered the beloved child whose seduction he intended to avenge:

Wide-eyed and patient ever, till the curse
Find where to fall and pierce,
Keen expiation whets with edge more dread
A father's wrong to smite a father's head.

In the six lines which succeed Mr. Swinburne alludes, of course, to that strong drama of "Marie Tudor," which is to Tennyson's treatment of the same theme as is red wine to water:

As red the fire-scathed royal Northland bloom
That left our story a name
Dyed through with blood and flame
E'er her life shrivelled from a fierier doom
Than theirs her priests bade pass from earth in fire
To slake the thirst of God their Lord's desire.

In the two lines which ensue, namely,

As keen the blast of love-enkindled fate
That burst the Paduan tyrant's guarded gate,

there is an obvious reference to the drama of "Angelo," animated and illumined by the striking figure of "La Tisbé," who is a nobler example of the type from which Scribe drew Adrienne Lecouvreur, one of those wayward but generous women whose faults attest a fervid temperament rather than a perverted heart. With like incisive brevity the poet indicates the wretched fate of the luckless Esmeralda:

As sad the softer moan,
Made one with music's own,
For one whose feet made music as they fell
On ways by loveless love made hot from hell.

Next the author outlines, in few words, the culminating situation of Ruy Blas, when, after frustrating the vile project of Don Sallust and saving the honor of the Queen, the hero of the piece asks the one refuge left from a fatal complication:

But higher than these and all the songs thereof
The perfect heart of love,
The heart by fraud and hate once crucified
That dying gave thanks, and in thanksgiving died.

Although it is seldom acted, there is no doubt that what may be called the trilogy of "The Burgraves" is one of the most massive and precious works of Hugo. The stage is crowded with strong types, from the august figure of Barbarossa to the slave woman who has nursed the dream of vengeance through two generations. What reader, too, is not impressed by the sharpness with which the author has brought out the swift decadence of German society in the thirteenth century through the concrete examples of grandsire, sire, and son? Hardly less striking is the felicity with which Hugo has relieved the strain upon the sterner emotions by introducing an idyl of youth and love whose mild gleams flicker in the shadow of sombre and ferocious passions. On "The Burgraves" Mr. Swinburne dwells at greater length:

Above the windy walls that rule the Rhine
A noise of eagles' wings
And wintry war-time rings,
With roar of ravage trampling corn and vine
And storm of wrathful wassail dashed with song;
And under these the watch of wreakless wrong,
With fire of eyes anhungered; and above
These, the light of the stricken eyes of love,
The faint sweet eyes that follow
The wind-outwinging swallow,
And face athirst with young wan yearning mouth
Turned after toward the unseen all-golden south,
Hopeless to see the birds back ere life wane,
Or the leaves born again;
And still the might and music mastering fate
Of life more strong than death and love than hate.

We come now to the terse, thought-laden lines in which, as in a bejewelled catalogue, Mr. Swinburne enumerates the studies of human life that, under the form of novel or romance, Victor Hugo has given to the world. Here, again, a line or two express the quintessence of the thing described. We may take for example the reference to "Nôtre Dame de Paris," which we cannot but esteem a nearly perfect realization of that impossible ideal, the historical novel:

Higher than they rose of old,
New builded now, behold
The live great likeness of our Lady's towers,
And round them like a dove
Wounded, and sick with love,
One fair ghost moving, crowned with fateful flowers,
Watched yet with eyes of blood-red lust
And eyes of love's heart broken and unbroken trust.

The next allusion is to the broad canvas of "Les Miserables," which portrays so many features and propounds so many problems of our modern civilization:

Nor less the weight and worth
Found even of love on earth
To wash all stain of tears and sins away,
On dying lips alit,
That living knew not it
In the winged shape of song with death to play;
To warm young children with its wings
And try with fire the heart elect for God-like things,
For all worst wants of all most miserable
With divine hands to deal
All balms and herbs that heal
Among all woes wherein under poor men dwell,
Our Master sent His servant Love to be
On earth his witness.

In the lines which immediately follow, the poet marks the psychological subject treated by Victor Hugo in the "Toilers of the Sea:"

But the strange, deep sea,
Mother of life and death inextricate,
What work should Love do there to war with fate?
Yet there must Love to keep
At heart of the eyeless deep
Watch, and wage war wide eyed with all its wonders,
Lower than the lightnings of its waves, and thunders
Of seas less monstrous than the births they bred;
Keep high there heart and head,
And conquer: then for prize of all toils past
Feel the sea close them in again at last.

The lines that succeed outline the central thought embodied in "L'Homme qui rit:"

A day of direr doom arisen thereafter
With cloud and fire in strife
Lightens and darkens life
Round one by man's hand masked with living laughter,
A man by men bemonstered, but by love
Watched with blind eyes as of a wakeful dove
And wooed by lust, that in her rosy den
As fire on flesh feeds on the souls of men,
To take the intense impure
Burnt-offering of her lure,
Divine and dark and bright and naked, strange
With ravenous thirst of life reversed and change,
As though the very heaven should shrivel and swell
With hunger after hell,
Run mad for dear damnation, and desire
To feel its light thrilled through with stings of fire.

And here we have finally interpreted the dominant, abiding impression left on the reader's mind by the latest of Victor Hugo's novels—"Quatre-vingt-treize:"

Above a windier sea,
The glory of Ninety-three
Fills heaven with blood-red and with rose-red beams
That earth beholding grows
Herself one burning rose
Flagrant and fragrant with strange deeds and dreams,
Dreams dyed as love's own flower, and deeds
Stained as with love's own life-blood, that for love's sake bleeds.

In words equally succinct and searching, quivering with a like sympathy and suffused with the same glow of passionate admiration Mr. Swinburne runs over the whole list of Victor Hugo's remarkable achievements. Looking back at last over the expanse, so wide as to seem incredible of "one great man's good works," and beholding in him not alone the many-sided prince of letters, but a leader in the advance of men made better through harsh trial and steadfast aspiration, he sums up what he deems the august significance of such a life in terms of noblest eulogy. He calls him "the mightiest soul,"

That came forth singing ever in man's ears
Of all souls with us, and through all these years
Rings yet the lordliest, waxen yet more strong,
That on our souls hath shed itself in song,
Poured forth itself like rain
On souls like springing grain
That with its procreant beams and showers were fed
For living wine and sacramental bread;
Given all itself as air gives life and light,
Utterly, as of right;
The goodliest gift our age hath given, to be
Ours while the sun gives glory to the sea.

The ode from which we have drawn these citations ends with an apostrophe whose simplicity and dignity fall on the reader's ear like the deep notes of a diapason. If we except the invocation to Athena, which concludes the tragedy of Erechtheus, we must discern in the lines which follow a conscious majesty, coupled with a heart-stirring reverence, without a parallel in the poetry of our time. They constitute the fitting capstone of an incomparable monument:

Our Father and Master and Lord,
Who hast thy song for sword,
For staff thy spirit, and our hearts for throne;
As in past years of wrong,
Take now my subject song,
To no crowned head made humble but thine own;
That on thy day of worldly birth
Gives thanks for all thou hast given past thanks of all on earth.

We cannot take leave of this volume without noting the stern words in which Mr. Swinburne utters his private protest against the projected interment of the son of Napoleon III. in Westminster Abbey. With what undying hate republicans should regard that Second Empire which has proved an accursed blight to France, and how little it behooves the sons of liberty-loving England to bestow misplaced honor and a maudlin sympathy on any of the brood of Bonaparte the poet has pointed out in "The Garden of Cymodoce" from which we quote a specially pertinent passage:

But when our master's homeless feet were here,
France yet was foul with joy more foul than fear,
And slavery chosen, more vile by choice of chance
Than dull damnation of inheritance
From Russian year to year.
Alas fair mother of men, alas my France,
What ailed thee so to fall, that wert so dear
For all men's sake to all men, in such trance,
Plague stricken? Had the very gods that saw
Thy glory lighten on us for a law,
Thy gospel go before us for a guide,
Had these waxed envious of our love and awe?
Or was it less their envy than thy pride
That bared thy breast for the obscene vulture claw,
High priestess, by whose mouth Love prophesied,
That fate should yet mean freedom? Howsoever,
That hour, the helper of men's hearts, we praise,
Which blots out of man's book of after days
The name above all names abhorred for ever.

It is not strange that the author of these lines should feel himself irresistibly impelled—in view of the anomalous distinction offered to the exponent of Bonapartist crimes and schemes by the Dean of Westminster—to relieve his conscience from a sense of public duty in the following sonnet:

"Let us go hence." From the inmost shrine of grace
Where England holds the elect of all her dead
There comes a word like one of old time said
By gods of old cast out. Here is no place
At once for these and one of poisonous race.
Let each rise up from his dishallowed bed
And pass forth silent. Each divine veiled head
Shall speak in silence with averted face;
"Scorn everlasting and eternal shame
Eat out the rotting record of his name
Who had the glory of all these graves in trust
And turned it to a hissing. His offence
Makes havoc of their desecrated dust
Whose place is here no more. Let us go hence."

Such are the accents of austere truth and compressed scorn with which a republican poet denounces the proposed desecration of Westminster Abbey by the erection of a monument to the son of Napoleon III. Such an act Mr. Swinburne would account "an insult at once to contemporary France, and to the present only less than to past generations of Englishmen." M. W. H.

Curious Myths of the Middle Ages.

The Messrs. Roberts have published, under the above title, a pleasing compilation of mediæval legends, by S. BARING GOULD. The author has a happy faculty of story-telling, and the subjects selected for treatment are skilfully chosen, being, for the most part, unfamiliar, in their original dress, to modern readers. Many of them, however, have been made the theme of well-known romances, operas, or dramas, and have thus added to their native charm a secondary interest of association. Among the legends invested with this double fascination is that of the "Wandering Jew," on which the romances of Eugene Sue and Dr. Croly were founded; that of "The Mountain of Venus," and of "Melusina," which have respectively supplied the motives of Wagner's "Tannhaüser" and "Lohengrin," and the story of the "True Cross."

There is a very extensive bibliography relating to the several appearances in different places and periods of the Wandering Jew, but Mr. Gould has been careful to cull his materials from those narratives bearing the most impressive semblance of authenticity. He quotes at length from the account of Dr. Von Eitzen, who, at Hamburg, in the year 1547, met a man who was believed to be the Hebrew cursed with immortality. It does, at all events, seem to be established by the evidence that this person knew a great number of languages so perfectly as to pass for a native of their respective countries, and that, upon being questioned by many scholars, each of whom had made a given epoch the subject of special study, he displayed an extraordinary familiarity with the history of the previous fifteen hundred years. At various dates during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a person offering the same credentials, and currently believed to be identified with the individual just mentioned, appeared in different European cities, and was minutely interrogated by competent persons. As late as the end of the last century, or the beginning of the present, one of these impostors attracted attention in England. He declared, like his predecessors, that he had been an officer of the Sanhedrim, and that he had struck Christ as he left the judgment hall of Pilate. He remembered, so he averred, all the Apostles, and described their personal appearance, their clothes, and their peculiarities. He, too, spoke a multitude of languages, claimed the power of healing the sick, and asserted that he had travelled nearly all over the world. An English nobleman conversed with him in Arabic, and those who heard him were perplexed by his wide familiarity with foreign tongues and places. Oxford and Cambridge sent professors to question him, and to detect the imposition, but they failed to convict him. Of course we can understand that, given the currency of such a myth, men might now and then endeavor to take advantage of it; but it is noteworthy that all of these impostors played their part adroitly, and, according to the evidence, refused to accept money or anything except the food and drink required to satisfy the wants of the moment. As to the origin of the myth, it has been sometimes suggested that the Wandering Jew is an impersonation of that race which, to the eyes of the mediæval Christians, seemed to roam Cain-like over the earth, with the brand of a brother's blood upon it, and which, according to the text of Scripture, is not to pass away till the times of the Gentiles are accomplished. Reasonable as this hypothesis looks at first sight, it is not easily harmonized with the leading features of the story. In the legend the Wandering Jew becomes a penitent and earnest Christian, whereas the Hebrew nation has still the veil upon its heart; and, again, as we have said, he eschews money, which is hardly an Israelite trait.

The story which Wagner has developed in "Tannhaüser" is a very ancient myth Christianized, a widespread tradition localized. It appears in every branch of the Aryan family, and examples might be quoted from popular tales current in all parts of Europe. The root of the legend, as it may be traced in the folk lore of heathen times, seems to involve the following elements, to wit, the underground folk seek union with human beings, and a man is enticed into their abode, where he marries a woman of the underground race. He desires, however, to revisit the earth, and escapes, but subsequently returns again to the region below. This mythical groundwork was variously expanded in the mediæval tales, and the most elaborate version is set forth at length by Mr. Gould. According to this form of the story a famous Minnesinger passing one of the cliffs known as Venusbergs in Germany, beheld a white glimmering figure whom he knew by her attributes and superhuman perfection to be none other than Venus. He follows the figure into a cavern, and spends seven years of revelry and debauch in the heart of the mountain. By and by these pleasures pall upon him, and his conscience begins to sting him, but it is only when, in the bitterness of his grief, he calls upon the Virgin Mother, that a rift opens in the mountain side and he stands above ground. To one priest after another he makes confession, but none dare give him absolution, and he journeys on to Rome, where Urban IV. then occupied the chair of St. Peter. Shocked at the immensity of the sin, the Pope thrust the penitent indignantly from him, exclaiming, "Sooner shall this staff in my hand grow green and blossom, than that God should pardon thee." But three days after he had gone, Urban discovered that his pastoral staff had put forth buds, and he sent messengers after the pilgrim, only to hear, however, that a way-worn man, with haggard brow and bowed head, had just entered the Venusberg. Since then the Tannhaüser has not been seen. In the legend, as it has thus shaped itself in the middle ages, we see thinly veiled the story of a man, Christian in name but heathen at heart, allured by the attractions of paganism, which seem to satisfy his poetic instincts and gives full rein to his passions. But after a while the religion of sensuality leaves a great void in his breast, and in his spiritual hunger he turns to Christianity, but is repelled by its ministers, whose practice is widely at variance with their professions. He meets with no sympathy, the warm springs which gushed up in his heart are choked, his softened spirit is again hardened, and he returns in despair to drown his anxieties in the debauchery of his former creed.

The fable of Melusina was already familiar to modern readers in the story of Undine before it was embodied in the opera of "Lohengrin." The skeleton of the romance, which may be found in Sanscrit and early Keltic myths, turns on the passion of a man for a woman of supernatural race, who consents to live with him subject to one condition. This he breaks and loses her, and, seeking her, either fails or succeeds in recovering her, according to the different versions of the legend. The half-serpent or fish shape of Melusina, in the Gallic story, viewed in connection with the prevalence of tales of mermaids among Keltic populations, indicates these water nymphs as having been originally deities of those peoples.

Mr. Gould's extensive acquaintance with the investigations and tentative conclusions of the comparative mythologists is best attested in his analysis of the Legend of the Cross. This wildest of mediæval fancies, which traces back to Adam the planting of the tree out of which was hewn the beam on which Christ was crucified, is founded, he thinks, unconsciously, on an indisputable truth, namely, that the cross was a sacred sign long before Christ died upon it. In the view of comparative mythology it is more than a coincidence that by the cross Osiris should give life eternal to the spirits of the just; that with the cross Thor should smite the head of the great serpent, and bring to life those who were slain; that beneath the cross the Muysca mothers should lay their babes, trusting by that sign to secure them from the power of evil spirits; and that with the same symbol to protect them the ancient people of Etruria should lay them down in the dust.

The least satisfactory portion of Mr. Gould's book is his discussion of the legends relating to the "Fortunate Isles." He seems disposed to ascribe the belief in the existence of a great island or continent beyond the Atlantic, which by the twelfth century had become widely diffused, not only among the Scandinavian people, but in Ireland, to a legendary origin. The truth is that this opinion was built upon discoveries now universally believed to be authentic. Whatever may be said for or against the assertion of many northern antiquarians that a Welsh colony was led beyond the sea by Madoc in 1169, the reality of the Norse voyages to Vineland and various points on the coast of North America has ceased to be debatable. Moreover the popular faith in the existence of land west of the Atlantic rested on something more substantial than legend, even before the Norse discovery. The canoes, bodies, timbers, and nuts washed upon the western coasts of Europe were only explicable on that theory, and the remarkable incident related by Pliny could bear no other interpretation. According to Pliny's account, the historical accuracy of which has not been questioned, a boat load of swarthy men were driven, after a prolonged westerly storm, on the coasts of Germany. As the features, complexion, and language of these men had nothing in common with the negroes or Moors of Africa, or with any European race with which the Romans were acquainted, they were fain to identify them with the natives of India, and assumed the existence of a northeast passage whose practicability has in our day been demonstrated by Nordenskiold. In view of all the facts, however, it seems impossible to evade the conclusion that these men had been driven by a succession of westerly storms, and under the drift of the same current which casts timber and nuts on the shores of Europe, from their homes on the islands of the Azores, or on the coast of North America.

Goldwin Smith on Cowper.

Of the score or more of writers selected to prepare the "English Men of Letters," not more than two or three can be compared in respect of judicial competence and literary ability with Prof. GOLDWIN SMITH. When we call to mind the direction, however, which his studies have taken, we should have preferred, with an eye to our own pleasure and profit, to see a task assigned to him somewhat different from that which he has undertaken in his *Life of Cowper* (Harpers). We should have liked to see his knowledge and insight turned to the largest possible account in the portrait of some author whose career was closely interwoven with the salient and important historical features of his time; such men, for instance, as Swift and Bolingbroke; and we do not hesitate to add that Prof. Smith might have treated the lives of Milton, of Defoe and Burke more incisively and fruitfully than has been done by the writers who have performed that office for the present series. We will not cavil, however, at a selection of whose grounds and motives we know nothing, but express our satisfaction that even in the record of a life so isolated and unworldly as was Cowper's, the biographer has seized the subtle relation of his subject to the moral forces of his time, and has thus contrived to fashion, out of slender materials, a substantial contribution to the spiritual history of the English people.

It seems to be inseparable from the function of biography, when exercised in good faith, that the faculty of comparison should be measurably cramped, and the perspective of literary achievements more or less distorted. Concentrated on one point, the mind measures less exactly the objects in the field of vision. Even the cool and circumspect author of the book before us had not escaped the tendency to slightly exaggerate the relative merit of the subject which employs him. After his task is done, indeed, and he casts over the performance one glance of retrospect, he feels moved to acknowledge that there is an immense difference between the interest attaching to Cowper, and that which invests any one among the far greater poets of the succeeding age. He is conscious that he may have erred somewhat on the side of partiality, and over estimation, for he recognizes in the character of the man something so winning that his critic may be easily beguiled into giving him too high a place. It seems to us that Prof. Smith is under the fascination of this charm when he pronounces Cowper the most important English poet of the period between Pope and the illustrious group headed by Wadsworth, Byron, and Shelley. We cannot but think this statement involves an inadequate estimate of Burns, of Gray, of Goldsmith, and of Thomson. That Gray's achievements were of a higher, brighter, and more enduring sort, will be, we imagine, very generally conceded, and the claim of Burns to outrank any of his contemporaries in respect of lyrical genius can only be evaded on the plea that Burns was not an Englishman, to which we might rejoin that he is, at all events, included in the present collection of "English Men of Letters." As a student of mankind, few, probably, would place the recluse Cowper on the same footing as Oliver Goldsmith, and, as a painter of nature, Thomson unquestionably excels any other poet of his time, though he was not altogether emancipated from a conventional Arcadianism, the costumes and lay figures of the sham idyl. Prof. Smith himself admits that the range of Thomson is far wider, that he paints nature in all her moods; Cowper only in a few, and those the gentlest.

There are two features of this biography on which the reader will be apt to bestow particular attention, because they are peculiarly calculated to draw out the specific acquirements of the author. Prof. Smith, we need not say, is a thoroughly classical scholar, and he is also one of the most trustworthy authorities on English history. None of our contemporaries, if we except Prof. Stubbs and Prof. Freeman, is generally acknowledged to have a larger and surer grasp on the data which disclose the origin and evolution of the political, social, and moral agencies creating the English commonwealth. Now it was Cowper's conversion to Evangelicism which gave him his inspiration and the theme of his best work, and it was Cowper's attempt to translate the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" which consumed a large part of his best years, and which proved ultimately fatal to his health and to his life. The significance of that Evangelical revival, which found in Cowper its most characteristic lyrical and ethical exponent, and the merit of that translation, on which the poet lavished so much of his powers, are both topics on which Prof. Goldwin Smith is certain to be heard with respect and interest.

When the active years of Cowper's literary life began, the religious revival was in full career. The great spiritual uprising of the eighteenth century had, as is well known, Wesley for its chief apostle, organizer, and dictator; Whitefield for its great preacher; Fletcher of Madeley for its typical saint; Lady Huntingdon for its patroness among the aristocracy, and the chief of its devout women. So far as the masses were concerned, it was, in fact, a preaching of Christianity anew. Prof. Smith does not doubt that in the effects produced by Evangelicism and Methodism, the good has outweighed the evil. The spiritual fire which they have kindled, the character which they have produced, the moral reforms which they have wrought, the works of charity and philanthropy to which they have given birth, are matters not only of recent memory, but of present experience. No one, on the other hand, has pointed out more sharply and inexorably than the author of this volume the weak and shabby side of that remarkable upheaval. He exposes unflinchingly the drawbacks and follies which have discredited the movement and its later outgrowths in our own time; the extravagance, exaggeration, breaches of good taste in religious matters, unctuousness, and cant; the chimerical attempts to get rid of the flesh and live an angel's life on earth; the delusions about special Providences and miracles; the tendency to overvalue doctrine and undervalue duty; the arrogant assumption of spiritual authority by leaders and preachers; the self-righteousness which fancies itself the object of a divine election and looks out with a sort of religious complacency from the Ark of Salvation in which it imagines itself securely placed upon the drowning of an unregenerate world. Cowper seems to have fallen especially under the influence of an evangelical preacher named Newton, whose religion was one of mystery and miracle, full of sudden conversions, special Providences, and satanic visitations. Seclusion from the sinful world was an essential part of Newton's system, and under his injunctions Cowper was almost entirely cut off from intercourse with his friends and people of his own class. To complete the poet's mental isolation, it appears that, having sold his library, he had scarcely any books. Such a course of Christian happiness as this could only end in one way, and to prevent the disciple's backsliding Newton directed him to employ his poetical gifts in contributing to a hymn book which the preacher was compiling. Prof. Smith cannot see that Cowper's Olney hymns have any serious value as poetry. Hymns, he adds, rarely have.

As "Paradise Lost" is to militant Puritanism, so, in our author's opinion, is "The Task" to the religious movement of Cowper's time. To its character as the poem of a sect it owed, and still owes, much of what popularity it has had. Not only did it give beautiful and effective expression to the sentiments of a large religious party, but it was about the only poetry that a strict Methodist or Evangelical could read, while to those whose worship was unritualistic, and who were debarred by their principles from the theatre and the concert, anything in the way of art that was not illicit must have been eminently welcome. There are, of course, passages in "The Task" which please, apart from anything peculiar to a religious school, and it is these alone which now keep the poem alive. But Cowper would not please the reader at the expense of conscience, and the parts of "The Task" penned by conscience, taken together, form a lamentably large proportion of the poem. An ordinary reader can be carried through them, if at all, only by his interest in the history of opinion, or by the companionship of the writer, who is always individually present, as Walton is in his "Angler." The biographer reminds us, however, that Cowper at his worst is a highly-cultivated Methodist; that if he is sometimes enthusiastic, and possibly superstitious, he is never coarse or unctuous. Just after his conversion the poet used to preach to everybody, but later his enthusiasm was considerably tempered, and he spoke with contempt of "the twang of the conventicle."

It was, our author thinks, under an evil star that Cowper took to translating Homer. The protracted and exhausting toil buried his finer faculty and shattered his health. This scheme of reproducing Homer in modern verse Prof. Smith calls the Polar Expedition of literature, always failing, yet still desperately renewed. Homer defies modern reproduction, not only because his primeval simplicity is a dew of the dawn which can never be redistilled, but because his primeval savagery is almost equally unpresentable. No civilized poet can don the barbarian sufficiently to revel in hideous wounds described with surgical gusto, in those ghastly particulars of the shambles and the spit which to the troubadour of barbarism seem as delightful as the images of the harvest and the vintage. Prof. Smith thinks there is nothing for it in the case of Homer but a prose translation, and even in prose it is not easy to find perfect equivalents for some of the Homeric phrases which belong, he says, psychologically, to a time when in ideas and language the moral was just disengaging itself from the physical. Now, Cowper had studied the Homeric poems thoroughly in his youth, and was able to translate them not very incorrectly, and he perhaps understood their peculiar qualities as well as it was possible for a reader without the historic sense to do. Before he began his version he had compared Pope's translation carefully with the original, and had noted the defects which make it, not a transcript of Homer, but a periwigged epic of the age of Anne. In his own work he avoids Pope's faults, and preserves at least the dignity of the original, while his command of language does not fail him, nor does he ever lack the guidance of good taste. As to the metre which Cowper chose, Prof. Smith considers that while Pope's rhyming couplets are the sorriest equivalents for the Homeric hexameter, yet blank verse is superior to them only in a negative way. He thinks the real equivalent, if any, is the romance metre of Scott, parts of whose poems are about the most Homeric things in our language. Cowper brought such poetic gifts to his work that his failure might have deterred Bryant, Lord Derby, and others from making the same hopeless attempt. Prof. Smith does not hesitate to pronounce Cowper's version a failure. It is no more, he says, a counterpart of the original than the Ouse creeping through its meadows is the counterpart of the Ægean rolling before a fresh wind and under a bright sun. Pope's translation delights schoolboys; Cowper's delights nobody, though on the rare occasions when it is taken from the shelf it commends itself, in a certain measure, to the taste and judgment of cultivated men.

Dr. Muhlenberg's Life and Work.

If a vote could be taken in the Protestant Episcopal Church as to which man among the many distinguished members of their communion has reflected most lustre upon that body, there can be little doubt that a vast majority of voices would pronounce the name of *William Augustus Muhlenberg*. We may be sure, then, that his biography, which has been written by ANNE AYRES, and published by the Harpers, will be eagerly welcomed by a wide audience. The fact, too, that this memoir has been compiled by a lady who was intimately associated with Dr. Muhlenberg's labors during eighteen years of his life, and who has succeeded him in the management of the Christian settlement at St. Johnland, will add not a little to the value and acceptability of the volume. With many interesting particulars of his life she was personally familiar, and his private papers, journals, and letters were given to her sole and unreserved perusal. Under these circumstances, nothing should be wanting to the authenticity and completeness of a biography executed, as this is, with conscientiousness and care. We may add that the author, though apparently an unpractised writer, has evinced more than ordinary skill in the arrangement and presentation of her materials.

For the details of Dr. Muhlenberg's private life and ministerial labors, we must refer the reader to the exhaustive account contained in the present volume. We cannot refrain, however, from drawing attention to what may be called the public side of his career, to his remarkable achievements as an organizer and philanthropist. His work in this direction began as early as his twenty-seventh year, when he was made rector of St. James's Church in Lancaster, Pa. Here he was instrumental in establishing the first public school outside of Philadelphia, and this was followed by the creation of a public library and athenæum in the same town. Seven years later, Dr. Muhlenberg started at Flushing, Long Island, an institute which was afterward known as St. Paul's College, and for nearly twenty years was its principal. In 1846, he formed the Church of the Holy Communion in New York city, the earliest free church belonging to the Episcopal communion, and his sister furnished the funds for the erection of the edifice. A year before he had organized the first Protestant sisterhood in the United States, and the ladies of this association were placed in charge of St. Luke's Hospital, another of Dr. Muhlenberg's creations, which was opened in 1859. The peculiar system of nursing established in St. Luke's by Dr. Muhlenberg, viewed in its medical aspect, is identical with that practised by "Sister Dora," and which is now exciting so much attention in England. Its central idea is not the substitution of voluntary for paid labor, because hired nurses are employed, but the interposition between the physician and his patients of educated Christian women, who voluntarily perform certain duties involving more responsibility than can be intrusted to paid nurses. It is, in a word, the substitution of intelligent, discriminative assistance for unquestioning routine obedience. While St. Luke's Hospital was building, its founder's activities were busied in many ways. He projected, for instance, an Evangelical Catholic periodical which advocated a union of all the Protestant bodies of Christendom. In pursuance of this scheme he presented a memorial in 1853 to the House of Bishops, who appointed a commission on church unity as an organ of communication or conference with such Christian bodies or individuals as might desire it.

In 1866 Dr. Muhlenberg began the formation of the industrial Christian settlement at St. Johnland, which his biographer terms the "Benjamin of his works." The controlling aim of this organization was to provide cheap and comfortable homes, together with the means of social and moral improvement, for deserving families from among the working classes, particularly of the city of New York. It was very wisely stipulated in the act of incorporation that the industry of the settlers should never be employed for pecuniary emolument, either to the society or to any of its agents. Among the secondary objects contemplated at St. Johnland was the maintenance of a home for aged men in destitute circumstances, and the care of friendless children and youth, especially cripples, by giving them a home, schooling, Christian training, and some trade or occupation by which they could earn a livelihood. The territory devoted to these benevolent designs is a tract of from five to six hundred acres, about one-third of which is arable soil, the remainder being woodland and salt meadow. Beside the "Spencer and Wolfe Home" for crippled children, "the St. John's Inn or Old Man's Home," the "Boy's House" or "Johnny's Memorial," and the "Church of the Testimony of Jesus," which were either built or begun during Dr. Muhlenberg's lifetime, there are now in the settlement some fifty cottages, most of which were erected at the cost of friends of the society. Each of these has five or six rooms and a garden of its own. No profit is made by any one out of the rent, which is therefore far less than would be paid for half the space in a city tenement, but the aggregate rents are expected ultimately to pay the expenses of the business agent and to keep the houses in repair.

It would be interesting to know the entire sum which from first to last passed through Dr. Muhlenberg's hands for purposes of charity. Secretly and delicately as he did much of this part of his work, an estimate of the aggregate would be impossible. He rejoiced, says his biographer, when people gave generously for a good object, and would sometimes speak of it with exhilaration. But those who knew him best never heard him so much as cursorily refer to the probable total of money influenced by himself toward works of beneficence.

THE ST. GOTHARD TUNNEL.

A Serious Difficulty in Completing it which Puzzles the Engineers.

LONDON, May 29.—A Geneva despatch to the *Times* says: "A difficulty has supervened in the construction of the St. Gothard Tunnel which threatens to seriously retard its completion. In the part of it where the formation is of porous white stone the vaulting has already given way twice or three times, and it has required the greatest care and constant staying with timber to prevent the passage thereabouts from completely collapsing. It was thought, however, that a granite wall six feet thick would support the superincumbent mass of white stone and keep the tunnel permanently open. A wall of this thickness has just been finished, but it has begun to give way, and the engineers are at their wits' end how to overcome the difficulty. In the opinion of the geologist of the tunnel it can be overcome only by making a wide curve so as to get round the white stone instead of going through it. This would involve the entire reconstruction of that part of the tunnel, in which case, probably, it will not be ready for traffic before the time fixed for the completion of the lines of approach—two years hence.

Is a Portrait the Property of an Artist?

From the Parisian.

Mlle. Alice Regnault, one of the prettiest actresses of Paris, is not happy. Her portrait, en amazone, by Boldini, has attracted much attention at the Salon. The picture, it appears, was painted by permission of the lady, who sat several times to the artist at his request, on the understanding that she should have the portrait when completed if she liked it. When it was about to be sent to the Salon she invited the opinion of several friends, who were so pleased with it that she asked the artist to put a price on it. The gallant painter vowed that the honor she had done him in sitting for her portrait was more than ample compensation for his labor, and offered her the canvas. She accepted, and regarded the portrait from that time as her own property.

She was, however, somewhat disagreeably surprised a few days ago at receiving a letter from the artist, who regretted that he could not deliver the painting, as it had been seen and purchased by a rich amateur. The lady insisted, however, on having the portrait, and told the artist to fix his own price, whereon he gallantly and modestly estimated its value at £1,000. Mlle. Alice Regnault refused to pay this sum, and has asked the law to decide whether the artist has any right to sell her likeness, and perhaps the explanations she can give will induce the judges to decide in her favor.

An analogous case occurred last year, when a platonic admirer of Mr. Gambetta ordered a sculptor to make his bust and her own. The conditions of the order stipulated that the two statues should be admitted to the Salon, and both of them found favor in the eyes of the jury, although the humble homage paid to the "young dictator" was so displeasing to Mr. Gambetta, who looked like some Jack-in-the-box of Hebrew persuasion, that he procured its removal through the influence of his friend and colleague, Mr. Turquet. Mon. Salvani brought a lawsuit against the Minister of Fine Arts, who, she argued, had no right to have her statues removed after they had been admitted to the Salon by the jury.

She lost the day, and the Court laid down as a general rule that it is not permitted to execute and exhibit the bust of any public man or important personage without having first obtained his consent and approval.

Little Tommy Smith.

Dimple-cheeked and rosy-lipped,
With his cap rim backward tipped,
Still in fancy I can see
Little Tommy smile on me—
Little Tommy Smith.

Little unsung Tommy Smith—
Scarce a name to rhyme it with;
Yet most tenderly to me
Something sings unceasingly—
Little Tommy Smith.

On the verge of some far land
Still forever does he stand,
With his cap rim rakishly
Tilted; so he smiles on me:
Little Tommy Smith.

Oh, my jaunty statuette
Of first love, I see you yet;
Though you smile so mistily,
It is but through tears I see
Little Tommy Smith.

But with crown tipped back behind,
And the glad hand of the wind
Smoothing back your hair, I see
Heaven's best angel smile on me—
Little Tommy Smith.

JAMES W. RILEY.

THE STORY OF A CHINESE RAILROAD.

How Foreign Barbarians Enraged the Spirits by Their Noisy Innovation.

The ship Tiber is reported as on her way here from Shanghai, having left that port on March 29, with 400 tons of iron rails on board, the remains of the only railroad China ever had. Mr. J. F. Twomley of the firm of H. Fogg & Co., an old merchant who spent many years in China, said yesterday: "It seems strange that those rails should be coming back here from Shanghai, for when the Government broke up that road they were sent down to Formosa, or, at least, were put ashore on the mainland at Foo-Chow for Formosa, where I believe there was some intent to lay them for a connection between the coal mines and the coast. So I don't quite understand why they should have been returned to Shanghai for shipment here. But they sometimes do queer things in that country, and it may be so. It was in 1873, I think, that Mr. Charles E. Hill of this city, Mr. O. B. Bradford, and some other American gentlemen obtained the right of way for a 'horse road' from Shanghai to Woo-Sung, a distance of about sixteen miles. Woo-Sung is a mere fishing village of not the slightest importance, at the confluence of the Woo-Sung and Yang-tse rivers. The right of way was obtained from the Toutai, or local Governor, at Shanghai. In a short time some English gentlemen became interested in the enterprise, and by certain changes it was made an English company, which claimed, by virtue of the right of way conceded for 'a horse road,' to have the right to lay down and operate a narrow gauge railroad with steam locomotives. The opposition by both the Imperial and the local Governments was intense, and the populace were violent in their antagonism to the project.

"Some years before an enterprising foreigner had striven to introduce the telegraph. He could not get a grant of right of way, so he just went ahead without it, set up his poles, and strung the wires on them. The people were very greatly exercised about it. They tore down the poles, and then made heavy claims before the Consul for damages from the innovator. It was not, they said, that the poles were in their way, or took up any serious quantity of ground, or seemed to have any bad influence on the crops, but because the thing offended the spirits of the earth and air, making them very angry, so that they visited their displeasure upon the people. One man had died, another had taken sick, the children of a third were ill, and all these things were directly traceable to the malign influence of the wicked telegraph. The same superstition broke out against the railroad. It, too, angered the conservative spirits, and the people were fierce in their opposition, so much so that they came near killing Mr. Hill at one time. The higher officials did not lay so much stress upon the displeasure of the spirits, but argued against the enterprise upon what would be very good legal grounds in this country. The Imperial Government claimed that from it only, as the sovereign power, could the right of way be granted to a construction which, as this road did, cut across highways and navigable streams. The territory through which this railroad ran is a low, level, alluvial tract, only a few feet above the river, and all over it are interlaced the little roads on which the native gardeners ran their wheelbarrows, and all through it are cut narrow canals through which they paddle their boats. The railroad ignored these established thoroughfares, which it certainly had no right to do, inasmuch as the local Toutai had no authority whatever to grant any such right of way. Indeed he emphatically denied having done so, and there was nothing in the concession to show that he had granted permission for a railroad, even for a horse railroad. He went so far as to declare that if they ran trains on the road they would have to run them over his body.

"But the parties building the road went ahead all the same, completed it, got their rolling stock on it, and operated it—without running over the Toutai, too. Still the opposition to it by the Government was not relaxed. About that time an Englishman, who had the idea of seeing if commercial intercourse could not be opened with India through the northwestern provinces, had the misfortune to get killed while seeking to explore those provinces. He had a permit from the Government to travel there, but it was supposed, nevertheless, that he was killed by officials, or with their knowledge and consent, so jealous are they of encroachments upon their conservatism. Out of that man's murder some serious complications of diplomatic relations sprang. The English Minister was upon the verge of quitting the country, and war between England and China was threatened. Well, all that trouble was patched up, but, in the settlement of it, this railroad matter—which was still an open question, and in which the English Minister had warmly interested himself in the company's favor—came up as a difficulty. Finally, through the efforts of the English Minister, a sale of the road to the Imperial Government was effected, at a price that would merely enable those concerned to get out whole. Immediately upon the Government assuming ownership, the spirits were duly propitiated by the tearing up of the rails and shipping away of all belonging to the road, except the comparatively worthless portions of the track and some little bridges. I don't remember how long the road was operated, but it was only for a few months. It did not pay, of course, and never could have paid. It was not expected to pay, but was simply the entering wedge to introduce railroads into China. That was the purpose of its construction, and nothing else. But they would not have it."

BIRDS AND BEASTS.

Some Phases of Animal Life that May be Seen in the Central Park.

The number and variety of native birds that have visited Central Park in their migrations this spring, or have come to make it their summer home, is unusually large. It really begins to appear as if the pugnacious little English sparrows are not to have everything their own way and become the only feathered denizens of the Park. About the earliest visitors after the little winter chickadees took flight were the purple grakles or crow blackbirds, who took possession in force of the trees and bushes around the lakes. In the Park report for 1868 the visitations of these birds were noted as rare and uncommon. Four or five years ago two pair made their nests in the Park, reared their young, and disappeared. The following season old and young came back, bringing friends with them, and so on each succeeding year until this season, by careful computation, not less than 2,000 of these noisy chatterers have taken up their abode around the several lakes.

At about the same time the native song sparrows made their appearance in large numbers and now and then a blue bird arrived in the warm days of March in search of a resting place. The robins were represented by a few pioneers early in the spring, but the main army came later. They are now to be seen by hundreds scampering over the lawns, and the air is vocal with their merry piping at night and morning. The cat birds, almost the equals of the mocking birds of the South, may be counted by scores in the thickets of shrubbery in a short stroll in any direction, and their sly cousins, the brown thrushes, may be seen now and then in the less frequented portions of the Park.

The early morning visitor, if he is a keen observer, is rewarded by the sight of many species of birds that are not often seen in the middle of the day, when the Park is full of people. The bobolink, with his showy livery of black and white, may be spited occasionally as he alights on a tilting bush or darts across an open, in full song as he flies; the meadow lark springs out of the grass here and there; the Baltimore oriole, in his orange and black uniform, may be seen flitting about in the trees; and the king birds and phoebes and blue birds and wrens and swallows and finches and warblers of various kinds are out in great numbers. Of the nearly 300 species of native birds that visit the Park probably more than one-third could be observed at this season by a person familiar with their names and habits.

The big reservoir and the lakes have been visited by wild geese, ducks and loons, but these water fowl always move on after a night's rest. Later the snipe and woodcock will frequent the shores. The gulls and kildeer, and plover and bittern are on hand to stay all summer, and the night herons with their beautiful green and grey plumage and long-flowing crests, are just beginning to make their annual appearance.

Spring has brought many changes in the Park menagerie. A little calf buffalo a few days old, with a very ugly and jealous mother, divides attention with an old mother 'possum with five little ones—so small that it would take two or three of them to weigh an ounce. They are growing very fast, are nearly half the size of a rat now, and curl their prehensile tails around things with all the dignity imaginable.

In one of the paddocks are two little gnus, one a week old, the other two weeks his senior. They are pretty and calf-like in their ways, but their parents won't allow them to be fondled.

The baby camel, now two or three months old, gains little in comeliness, and is still entitled to the blue ribbon as the ugliest of all four-footed beasts.

The young porcupine grows and bristles rapidly, and is half as big as its mother, who does not in the least abate in her fondness for it.

Old Emperor, Barnum's ugly elephant, has come back to the Park. He was on exhibition at the Rink a few weeks ago, but grew so ugly that it was not deemed safe to take him on the road this summer. He was put in a big cage made of iron rods an inch in diameter in a framework of heavy timbers. His temper continued to grow violent after he was put in the cage. The other day the keeper attempted to pass through the space between the cage and an adjoining pen, when Emperor charged on him, carrying the cage with him. The keeper was pinned fast by the cage and considerably bruised. But for timely help he might have been killed. After Emperor had amused himself by snapping the iron rods in two by butting them with his head, cross bars were put in and the cage was rivetted down by long iron rods. With these precautions and with chains hobbling his legs, old Emperor is considered a safe object to look at, provided the visitor keeps at a respectable distance.